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LABORATORY BULLETIN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES, HELENA, MONTANA JUL 11 1973

No. 47 June 25, 1973 David B. Lackman, Ph.D., Administrator, Laboratory Division

"CHAPTER NO. 248, MONTANA SESSION LAWS 1973, HOUSE BILL NO. 262"

"AN ACT PROVIDING FOR REDEFINING A PREMARITAL STANDARD SEROLOGICAL TEST TO INCLUDE ADDITIONAL TESTS; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 48-134, 48-136 and 48-137, R.C.M. 1947"

"Section 3. Section 48-137, R.C.M.1947, is amended to read as follows: "

"48-137. Definition of test -- rules and regulations. For the purpose of this act, a standard serological test shall be a test for syphilis, rubella immunity, approved by the department of health and environmental sciences. An approved laboratory shall be the laboratory of the department of health and environmental sciences or a laboratory approved by that department. Any other state, United States public health service or United States armed forces laboratory shall be considered approved for the purposes of this act. Such laboratory test may be made on request at the laboratory of the department of health and environmental sciences. Reasonable rules for reports to be submitted by any laboratory making tests and the manner of furnishing the reports to the certifying physician and the state shall be adopted by the department of health and environmental sciences."

This bulletin gives suggestions for meeting the requirements of this law when it becomes effective July 1, 1973. They will be of special interest to those 69 laboratories approved to perform serological tests for syphilis required for marriage.

1. Perform the VDRL or RPR card test as at present and handle the certificate, Form H.L. 38, in the usual manner. We do not anticipate a change in this form.
2. Send the serum remaining from the serological test for syphilis to: Virology Laboratory, Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Helena, Montana 59601 to be tested in the rubella hemagglutination-inhibition test. 0.5 cc of serum or 1.0 cc of whole clotted blood are required. The specimen should be accompanied by a RUBELLA HAI TEST request and report form. These are available from our laboratory.
3. A few laboratories may send more of their premaritals to us. However, for a laboratory doing a considerable number, this is not practical because of the time element.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRESENT RUBELLA HAI-TESTING PROGRAM

Since October 1970 we have tested all sera submitted to the serology laboratory and classified as premarital, prenatal, or family planning specimens in the rubella HAI test. It is performed once a week and we run from 400 to 500 serums in each test. My latest figure for our cost per specimen is \$1.30. If performed on an individual basis or in small runs, it would be prohibitively expensive for premaritals and this has been the experience of those few laboratories in Montana who have set up the test.

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Here are data on rubella HAI tests done in our laboratory for the first six months of 1973:

Number of tests performed	= 8,713	Number not showing immunity	= 745 (8.5%)
Classification: prenatal	= 2837	premarital	= 2002
family planning	= 1688	other	= 2186

An effort is made by the Immunization Program of the Department to obtain vaccination of the 8.5 percent susceptibles.

There has been a steady increase in rubella testing for the past six months and we expect a further increase after the first of July when House Bills 262 and 263 become effective. Our anticipated workload is 2200 specimens a month compared to 1800 at present.

The figures on serological tests for syphilis done in our laboratory in fiscal year 1972 are:

VDRL	= 31,823	Positive	= 1608	
Classification:		Prenatal	= 6359	(live births in Montana = 11,508 so theoretically we did 55.2% of the tests)
		premaritals	= 5617	(7368 marriages involving 14,736 persons so we accounted for 38.1% of the tests)
		family planning	= 507	(program just getting underway during the last six months of the year)

clinical and epidemiological for control = 19,340

FTA-ABS	= 948	Positive	= 349
Spinal fluid VDRL	= 287	Positive	= 6

It costs us \$1.00 to handle, test, and report results of VDRL and \$5.70 for an FTA-ABS. In fiscal year 1972 the cost of serological tests for syphilis in the laboratory was \$37,514.

SPECIAL NOTE

We have identified several isolates from specimens collected in connection with an outbreak of dysentery in a summer camp in Montana as Shigella sonnei. Conditions have been favorable for the spread of this organism via human carriers to other localities in Montana and Wyoming. Therefore, Health Departments should be alerted to the possibility for an increase in the number of cases of shigellosis.